



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ADVISORY

**THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ISSUES
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISTRICT AND REGIONAL HOSPITALS**

TERRORIST THREAT LEVEL CHANGES
OLD STATUS: YELLOW / YELLOW
NEW STATUS: ORANGE / ORANGE

(Washington, D.C.) – Due to the change of the terrorist threat level from Yellow to ORANGE until further notice, the DC Department of Health is issuing recommendations to District and Regional hospitals.

While no specific threat has been identified for the District, information indicates credible threats based on possible retaliatory attacks as the result of the impending war with Iraq. Chemical, radiological, and explosive attacks, along with possible biological agents are of particular concern.

Recommendations:

- **Use common sense as well as caution;**
- **Review and update disaster plans, with particular attention to handling mass casualty incidents;**
- **Check and monitor inventories and supplies and assure that operations can be maintained for a period of 48 -72 hours;**
- Check critical infrastructure for preparedness;
- **Assure that staff call and callback lists are accurate and updated;**
- Access points to hospitals should be limited and monitored; arrangements for added security and security personnel should be developed and able to be quickly implemented;
- Suspicious persons or vehicles should be immediately reported to law enforcement authorities;
- Implement and maintain heightened surveillance of clinical syndromes;
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- Review and update contact lists and protocols for reporting disease and emergencies to public health authorities and other officials;
- Review current expertise and training of hospital personnel in handling casualties caused by explosives, chemical, biological and radiological agents;
- Increase awareness of community events and large public gatherings that may be scheduled for the hospitals' service area;
- **Ensure access to ready-reference materials such as handbooks, internet information systems, subject matter experts, etc.;**
- Conduct internal vulnerability analyses to identify potential gaps and weaknesses in hospital services and operations;
- Consider improved physical and facility security measures that will assist with maintaining operational abilities;
- Conduct tests of all internal and external communications and back-up systems to assure proper working; assure communications with local and state agencies are tested and in working order (telephone, radio, internet/FRED, etc.).

Fact sheets are available and health facility personnel and health professionals should familiarize themselves with this information:

- Fact sheets and information related to bioterrorism, chemical and radiological emergencies are located at www.bt.cdc.gov and www.bioterrorism.dc.gov;
 - Fact sheets and information related to disaster management and emergencies are located at www.fema.gov;
 - Technical information by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) is located at www.atsdr.cdc.gov;
 - Emergency response guidelines and personal protective equipment resources by the National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety are located at www.cdc.gov/niosh.
- ❑ **Questions involving this advisory should be referred to the DC Department of Health at 202-442-9196.**
- ❑ **General questions concerning hospital preparedness should be referred to the DC Hospital Association at 202-682-1581.**

Specific questions regarding response during an actual incident should be referred to DC Emergency Management Agency 202-727-6161.

Editor's Note—Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

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